

NEWS FROM THE MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

For immediate release

July 28, 2010

Contact: Jon Ebelt, Public Information Officer, DPHHS, 406-444-0936

Chuck Council, Communications Specialist, DPHHS, 406-444-4391

Montana WIC adds Farm Direct Program

A new program, under the state's Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Program, encourages WIC participants to purchase fresh, locally grown produce from Montana farmers, the Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS) announced today.

WIC added the Farm Direct Program in June 2010 and already 94 farmers in 22 counties have become 'authorized' by WIC to sell their produce to participating families. WIC participants can redeem the Farmers' Market Nutrition Program Benefits and the WIC Fruit and Vegetable Benefit with authorized farmers who sell in a farmers' market, roadside stand or u-pick style at their farm location.

According to DPHHS Director Anna Whiting Sorrell, the Farm Direct Program increases access for WIC participants to purchase locally grown fresh fruits and vegetables and supports Montana farmers.

"Since many rural parts of the state do not have established farmers' markets, the addition of this program will help connect WIC participants with farmers," DPHHS Director Anna Whiting Sorrell said. "This program really furthers the WIC mission of promoting healthy eating and fostering good nutritional habits for participants."

The Montana WIC program is just the second state in the region to allow the use of the WIC Fruit and Vegetable Benefit directly with farmers. "We're working hard to stress the importance of encouraging the selection and preparation of healthy foods," Montana WIC Program Director Joan Bowsher said. "This program will help Montana farmers and WIC participants."

To become authorized to sell to WIC participants, farmers must meet certain basic requirements such as selling fresh produce on the approved WIC Farm Direct food list, growing the produce in Montana and displaying the 'We accept WIC' sign at their sales location.

The Montana WIC Program is available to families who meet established income guidelines. Applicants must be Montana residents and fall into one of these categories; pregnant women, new mothers, breastfeeding moms, infants or children under the age of five.

For more information about the Montana WIC Program please visit www.wic.mt.gov

Jon Ebel

Public Information Officer
Montana Dept. of Public Health
and Human Services

P.O. Box 4210

Helena, MT 59602

jebelt@mt.gov

Office: (406) 444-0936

Cell: (406) 461-3757